



Michael F. Easley

Governor

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William G. Ross Jr.

Secretary, DENR

PROJECTS GET PARTF FUNDS

The NC Parks and Recreation Authority approved the allocation of \$12.14 million for capital improvements and \$2.87 million for land acquisition in the state parks for the 2002-03 fiscal year at an October session at Mount Mitchell State Park.

The capital improvements include new visitor's centers at South Mountains and New River state parks and Dismal Swamp State Natural Area as well as improvements at Stone Mountain, Pilot Mountain and William B. Umstead state parks.

The authority learned that first-quarter revenues in the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund were \$7.6 million, up \$400,000 from a year ago. That reflects a strong real estate market since revenues originate as a share of the state's real estate deed stamp tax. Nonetheless, at the suggestion of division staff, the authority allocated less than 100 percent of expected revenues as a hedge against an uncertain budget situation.

The capital improvement projects came directly from priorities of the Project Evaluation



TOMMY WAGONER GETS HIS 30-YEAR SERVICE AWARD FROM DIRECTOR PHIL MCKNELLY. THIS MAY HAVE BEEN TOMMY'S LAST CONFERENCE.

PARK LEADERS GET MORE BUDGET NEWS

By CHARLIE PEEK
Public Information Officer

Despite a newly-minted budget for 2002-03, the Division of Parks and Recreation is yet likely to face serious budget cuts this year, according to Jane Smith, director of budget planning and analysis for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Smith, DENR's chief financial officer, delivered the prediction at the division's 52nd annual superintendent's conference.

continue to look at how to save money," Smith said. "It may not be what the public wants or what we want, but at least it'll keep things operational at some level."

At the end of the longest legislative "short" session in history, the current budget remains out of balance by at least \$77.5 million, including \$45.5 million left for Governor Mike Easley to deal with, either by finding new revenues or through budget cuts. DENR's share of that could be as much as \$8.7 million, and the division's share of that could be \$1.24 million, Smith said.

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"We're going to have to

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Program, said Lewis Ledford, superintendent of state parks, who presented them to the authority. They include:

β \$2.7 million to construct a visitor's center at Dismal Swamp along with a floating bridge to connect the natural area to US 17 across Dismal Swamp Canal.

β \$2.4 million for a visitor's center at South Mountains.

β \$3.5 million for initial construction at the US 221 access of New River State Park. That

includes a 7,500-square-foot visitor's center with exhibits, a ranger residence, some maintenance facilities and a group picnic shelter if funds allow.

β \$1 million for campground improvements at Stone Mountain. The authority had already approved \$1.55 million for this project to expand the campground from 38 to as many as 88 sites and an entrance contact station, access roads and utility extensions.

β \$420,200 for trail improvements at Pilot Mountain. The project will renovate both the 2-mile Ledge Springs Trail and the 1.5-mile Jomeokee Trail.

β \$334,800 for improvements to the Reedy Creek picnic area at William B. Umstead. One new picnic shelter will be built and an existing one will be renovated.

The authority also set aside \$800,000 in major maintenance funds, \$400,000 in small trail funds and \$50,000 for exhibit repair, to be divided among the four districts.

Land acquisition funds were earmarked for purchases in four areas.

The authority approved \$2.2 million to help with the purchase of 1,104 acres at Elk Knob in Watauga County. The Nature Conservancy purchased most of this property on the second highest peak in the county in September with the intent of reselling it to the state for use as a natural area. An adjacent small tract with a residence would also be purchased.

The Natural Heritage Trust Fund has already allocated \$2.25 million toward the purchase, and the division will approach the Clean Water Management Trust Fund in December for the balance of the purchase price.

The other acquisition projects include: 99 acres near Dismal Swamp State Natural Area to allow construction and staff access from a state secondary road; 80 acres on the west side of the Toxaway River at Gorges State Park; and, 35 acres in two tracts adjoining Jones Lake State Park, which will protect the northwest park boundary from development.

From The Director's Desk

Dear fellow employees:

It's been that time of year when festivals seem to be everywhere. More and more often, our state parks become the natural setting for some of these affairs celebrating the autumn season. The Old Fashion Day at Stone Mountain State Park celebrated its 12th anniversary a couple weeks ago. That event began as a dedication celebration for a new park office/visitor's center and just grew into a tradition.

Staging events such as those at Stone Mountain, Mount Mitchell, Jordan Lake and other parks is something like a holding a holiday party at your home. You enjoy planning for it and enjoy the festivities but are pretty relieved when it's over and everybody goes home. It takes a ton of work on the details, and it usually means that park staffs have to ask their colleagues at neighboring parks to come help out.

While these festivals sometimes appear to be at the edge of our mission, they are extremely valuable as public relations functions. The work that the staffs do help to weave life at the state parks into the fabric of the local community, and they can introduce state parks to people in the area who may be unfamiliar with all that we have to offer.

My congratulations on all the successful events this year, and my hat's off for all the hard work.

Sincerely,

Phil

Philip K. McKnelly

SUPERINTENDENTS

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Curiously, some of that shortfall can be offset by lapsed salaries – that is, salary money left unspent because of vacant positions. Currently, the division has more than 50 vacancies.

Smith noted, “We will have to determine how many positions we have to keep vacant.”

Despite this, Smith said that DENR fared reasonably well in the legislative session, largely because of improved relations between the department and legislative oversight committees.

The day before Smith’s comments, Division Director Phil McKnelly also predicted more rough financial times ahead. “The bottom line is, we can kind of tie a knot and hang on because I don’t think we’ve seen the end of it yet.”

McKnelly explained to the superintendents in detail the process of defining budget-cutting options this year that, at one point, put 34 positions at risk. And, he noted that budget cuts had narrowed from \$1.4 million to \$407,000 as the session ended, which included elimination of 12 positions, six of them filled.

“When you put it in that context, we did okay. The only way we’re going to get through this situation is by staying focused on our mission and staying together,” he said.

The superintendents had better news on the issue of improved radio communications, a subject that prompted much discussion at last year’s conference. Currently, rangers cannot talk via radio to other law enforcement agencies and often have trouble communicating park-to-park or even ranger-to-ranger.

Maj. David Munday of the NC Highway Patrol said his agency is committed to partnering with the division as the patrol

begins a major upgrade of its voice communications system and wants to initiate a memorandum of agreement soon.

The patrol views it as a safety issue for troopers as well as for rangers, Mundy said. “I think this is going to be a win-win for us and for you.”

He said one hurdle is that the public and legislators now think that different law enforcement agencies regularly communicate by radio.

Lewis Ledford, superintendent of state parks, added that the patrol can help the division leverage what funds it has through federal law enforcement grants. The Parks and Recreation Authority last year set aside \$200,000 for the project.

The superintendents revisited the idea of establishing a task force to move the project ahead. District superintendents were asked to nominate people to serve on the task force.

During the conference, three superintendents informally announced their decisions to retire during the next year. They are East District Superintendent Scott Daughtry, Dennis Helms of Merchants Millpond and Tommy Wagoner of Hanging Rock, who was also presented with a 30-year service award.

Service awards were also presented to: Jud Burns, 25 years; Sid Shearin, 20 years; Paul Donnelly, 15 years; and Eric Dousharm, 10 years.



SOUTH MOUNTAINS BRIDGE

RAY WALKER, MAINTENANCE MECHANIC IV AT SOUTH MOUNTAINS STATE PARK, DIRECTED INMATE LABOR TO CONSTRUCT THIS 97-FOOT SPAN ACROSS THE JACOB FORK RIVER ALONG THE NEW JACOB FORK RIVER TRAIL. THE BRIDGE IS DESIGNED AROUND 60-FOOT, STEEL I-BEAMS OVER THE RIVER CHANNEL. ALAN JEFFREYS AND BUDDY WEST DESIGNED THE CONCRETE FOUNDATION AND I-BEAM INFRASTRUCTURE. THE PROJECT INVOLVED MORE THAN 1,000 MAN HOURS OF LABOR DURING A 90-DAY PERIOD.

*A POTTER'S WHEEL
WAS JUST ONE OF
ABOUT THREE DOZEN
EXHIBITS AT THE 12TH
ANNUAL STONE
MOUNTAIN STATE
PARK OLD FASHION
DAY.*



THAT OLD TIMEY FEELING. . .

If you needed your apples pressed, or your chair caned or a bit of advice on that cantankerous steam engine, the Old Fashion Day at Stone Mountain State Park Oct. 12 was where you needed to be.

About three dozen exhibitors were spread among the hardwoods of the park's picnic area to display their skills for several thousand visitors.

This marked the 12th year that park staffers and local businesses teamed to sponsor what has become a traditional celebration of autumn. It's an event that's as popular with the neighbors around Traphill as it is with park visitors from across the state.

Ranger Greg Church said Old Fashion Day began as a way to dress up dedication ceremonies for the park's new visitor's center, and it quickly grew to an event that 5,000 to 7,000 visitors expect to attend each year.

As he helped direct musicians onto the stage, Church said, "I've been doing this since it began and the hardest part is making sure everybody shows. If we can get everybody here, that's 90 percent of it. It takes about six months to plan this thing."

Part of that planning involves bringing in extra rangers from nearby parks. Most of the rangers' day is spent directing traffic, with perhaps a few minutes late in the afternoon to listen to the music.

This year's entertainment list included the popular Kruger Brothers, an acoustic and bluegrass group from Switzerland that has made Wilkes County a second home. A gospel group, cloggers and a succession of pickers kept the music going all day.



A LOCAL METHODIST CHURCH SUPPLIED THE HOT DOGS AND HAMBURGERS AND R.G. ABSHER, BELOW, SUPPLIED SOME IRISH FIDDLE TUNES.





WEST DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT WALT GRAVLEY, LEFT, DOES HAYRIDE DUTY. BELOW LEFT, PARK SUPERINTENDENT ED FARR TALKS TO MEMBERS OF 'HIT AND MISS ENGINES.' BELOW RIGHT, RANGER BECKY ROSE OF NEW RIVER STATE PARK TEACHES VISITORS HOW TO MAKE A CORN SHUCK DOLL.



.. .AT STONE MOUNTAIN



THE PARK'S PICNIC SHELTER MAKES A DANDY SPOT FOR A QUILTING BEE AND SOME CASUAL CONVERSATION.

LANDSLIDE CLUE TO GORGES HISTORY

By TAMARA WARD
Publications Coordinator

A geological inventory at Gorges State Park has revealed a turbulent tectonic history there and uncovered an active landslide that may move several inches to a few feet per year, depending on precipitation.

Geologist Rick Wooten described the landslide as like a “living, breathing being that responds to what kind of vegetation is living on it and rainfall.”

Wooten was part of a team from the NC Geological Survey in the Division of Land Resources that conducted the inventory and geological mapping, a project funded by the NC Natural Heritage Trust Fund.

The four-acre, bowl-shaped landslide borders the Toxaway River near Panther Creek in the heart of the park. With an average slope of 60 percent, steep scarps give the land a stair-step appearance.

Trunks of 75-year-old trees are curved because the landslide has moved their roots while the treetops have continued to grow toward their canopy holes. A creek that travels through the area disappears under rocky debris at the base of the landslide.

Gorges Superintendent Steve Pagano said that the inventory has supplied the park with information that is useful on a variety of levels.

“Prior to (the survey) we knew we had steep terrain, but we didn’t know what was under the surface,” Pagano said. The survey pinpointed rock outcrops, soil and bedrock types, faults, and the active landslide, he said.

The park is using the information to modify its master plan and to help determine where to build park facilities. And, the park is considering routing a trail through the landslide to Wintergreen Falls on the Toxaway River as a way of adding an interpretive element for hikers.

Information from the geologic inventory is also being used in the park’s Environmental Education Learning Experience (EELE), which is in the early stages of development. The EELE focuses on how the geology, topography and climate of the park create uncommon natural communities that support many unusual or rare plant and animal species.

“The advantage of having Natural Heritage Trust Fund projects is all this information aids in



TREES ON THE LANDSLIDE SHOW DISTINCT CURVATURE.

the development of the park’s EELE,” said Mike Lambert, a Gorges park ranger. “With earth science being one of the primary components for high school graduation, I think it would be a valuable tool for students to come out and actually see an active landslide and how it has not only influenced the geology but also the plant communities.”

Geologists took borings from trees growing in the landslide and from a control tree outside the landslide. By comparing the trees’ growth rings, geologists were able to estimate periods of time when the slide moved in the past.

Geologists also studied boulder deposits along the Toxaway River. By counting the rings on trees growing on the boulder deposits, geologists were able to determine the year the deposits were left — 1916 when the Toxaway Dam failed and the river flooded. The 1916 flood may have also triggered the landslide, geologists said.

The geological inventory was one of several studies at the park by the NC Natural Heritage Program using \$122,500 in grants from the trust fund. Others included mapping the park’s vegetation, an inventory of fish in the park and a rare plant survey.

“The idea was to ensure that as new facilities are put in we would not actually harm the significant resources of a new park,” said Linda Pearsall, head of the Natural Heritage Program.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS MONTHLY ATTENDANCE REPORT SEPTEMBER 2002

PARK	SEPT. 2002	TOTAL YTD SEP. 2002	SEPTEMBER 2001	TOTAL YTD SEPT. 2001	(2001/2002) SEPT. YTD	
CAROLINA BEACH	21,288	195,887	25,596	209,571	-17%	-7%
CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE	13,247	117,824	12,547	110,411	6%	7%
CROWDER'S MOUNTAIN	25,144	229,592	33,633	219,248	-25%	5%
ENO RIVER	24,384	240,681	31,031	251,219	-21%	-4%
OCCONEECHEE MTN.	3,024	26,593	3,360	28,087	-10%	-5%
FALLS LAKE	43,189	924,750	70,807	1,026,953	-39%	-10%
FORT FISHER	72,855	872,861	60,632	540,780	20%	61%
FORT MACON	87,104	1,120,384	111,632	1,060,688	-22%	6%
GOOSE CREEK	10,826	111,088	10,470	91,578	3%	21%
GORGES	11,878	129,851	11,627	79,323	2%	64%
HAMMOCKS BEACH	13,071	153,208	17,526	161,038	-25%	-5%
HANGING ROCK	30,342	325,848	38,652	329,172	-21%	-1%
JOCKEY'S RIDGE	79,718	846,666	81,501	866,784	-2%	-2%
JONES LAKE	9,294	89,054	7,524	102,110	24%	-13%
JORDAN LAKE	123,575	1,349,758	141,012	1,079,760	-12%	25%
KERR LAKE	100,888	1,428,380	129,092	1,242,796	-22%	15%
LAKE JAMES	14,445	228,729	14,959	215,154	-3%	6%
LAKE NORMAN	33,708	311,105	27,453	204,084	23%	52%
LAKE WACCAMAW	8,160	85,600	8,376	87,174	-3%	-2%
LUMBER RIVER	4,825	40,695	4,905	40,066	-2%	2%
MEDOC MOUNTAIN	5,453	57,275	7,524	54,719	-28%	5%
MERCHANT'S MILLPOND	6,720	73,165	6,963	67,061	-3%	9%
MORROW MOUNTAIN	26,800	340,320	47,480	403,540	-44%	-16%
MOUNT JEFFERSON	9,789	76,003	9,095	70,428	8%	8%
MOUNT MITCHELL	51,289	436,695	63,000	399,693	-19%	9%
NEW RIVER	11,466	124,117	16,612	107,780	-31%	15%
PETTIGREW	7,921	66,574	8,605	74,392	-8%	-11%
PILOT MOUNTAIN	33,646	301,196	47,057	323,582	-28%	-7%
RAVEN ROCK	10,262	89,767	12,324	93,515	-17%	-4%
SINGLETARY LAKE	654	14,599	1,540	10,486	-58%	39%
SOUTH MOUNTAINS	14,468	130,249	14,632	149,834	-1%	-13%
STONE MOUNTAIN	52,208	368,151	46,008	388,194	13%	-5%
WEYMOUTH WOODS	2,509	21,793	2,870	19,904	-13%	9%
WILLIAM B. UMSTEAD	29,082	316,915	37,335	307,004	-22%	3%
SYSTEM TOTAL	993,232	11,245,373	1,163,380	10,416,128	-15%	8%

RANGER BOCKHAHN GETS AWARD FROM CORPS

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers staff from Falls and Jordan lakes recently presented Falls Lake State Recreation Area Park Ranger Brian Bockhahn with a Public Service Award for his public outreach and interpretation efforts.

Like his colleagues, Bockhahn works daily to assist the public in safely enjoying facilities and resources at Falls Lake. But, Brian was recognized for going beyond those normal duties in his considerable efforts to help visitors understand and appreciate the lake's natural resources.

The Corps noted that Bockhahn has contrib-

uted to the knowledge of bird populations at Falls Lake by organizing the Falls Lake Circle for the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

He developed the Falls Lake Bird Trail Brochure and has contributed to other locally published guides to aid the public in enjoying the natural wonders of the lake. He has presented workshops on waterfowl, birds, butterflies, and dragonflies for the public and partner agency personnel.

His commitment to excellence and care for the resource is exceptional and was considered worthy of special recognition, according to the Corps.

NC COASTAL LAND TRUST HONORS LeBLOND

Richard LeBlond, inventory biologist for the NC Natural Heritage Program, was given the 2001-2002 Conservationist's Award at the September meeting of the NC Coastal Land Trust, a 10-year-old non-profit organization dedicated to preserving natural areas and waters that has protected more than 23,000 acres since its inception.

"We're trying to recognize people who we think have done something outstanding for conservation and for the land trust," said Janice Allen, director of land protection for the trust.

LeBlond discovered a 117-acre longleaf savannah that supports more than 170 native plant species, including six rare plants and 10 plants on the Natural Heritage Program's watch list while completing an inventory in Pender County.

Allen said that LeBlond contacted the landowners and took them in the field, showed them the rare plants, and explained the importance of the savannah. He provided information about the

savannah to the land trust, and when the property went up for sale, LeBlond alerted the land trust.

"Richard has been a friend to the land trust for a long time, and his inventory — that kind of data — is critical to us," Allen said.

LeBlond has been working with the Natural Heritage Program since 1994. He has completed inventories in Brunswick, Columbus, Pender and Onslow counties and is currently working on the New Hanover County inventory.

"He's one of a handful of field biologists who can be counted on every year to discover new state records and sometimes even new species," said Linda Pearsall, head of the Natural Heritage Program. "His work has supported protection of several significant natural heritage areas and increased our understanding of already protected areas."

Pearsall also praised LeBlond's "commitment to conservation, his willingness to take on new challenges and his sense of humor."

Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Division of Parks & Recreation is:



to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;

to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout North Carolina;

to exemplify and encourage good stewardship of North Carolina's natural resources

and

for all citizens and visitors of North Carolina.

The Steward

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